

PARTNERSHIP

A unique partnership formed in 1998 to help communities throughout the state of Washington improve their physical and cultural environments. Through this partnership, the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS Rivers & Trails) joined with the Washington Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (WASLA) to provide no-fee design services to community-based conservation projects.

NPS Rivers & Trails provides technical assistance to communities, agencies, and non-profits for developing trails and greenways, preserving open space, conserving rivers, promoting health and fitness, and improving watersheds. WASLA, the professional organization representing landscape architects and designers in the state of Washington, works to advance education and skill in the art and science of landscape architecture.

Through this partnership, WASLA works with NPS Rivers & Trails to offer volunteer design services as part of the planning expertise Rivers & Trails provides to communities who request their assistance. So successful has this partnership been in Washington, that it served as the model for a continuing national level NPS Rivers & Trails/ASLA partnership forged in 2000.



To date, WASLA and the Seattle NPS Rivers & Trails office have collaborated on four community design workshops in Washington: Seattle's International District, Liberty Lake Trails, Skagit County's Northern State Recreation Area, and Moses Lake Activity Paths. In June 2005, the partnership went to central Washington to work with the Wenatchee community to enhance connections between city neighborhoods, downtown, and the Wenatchee Foothills Trails.

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2005

Community Assistance
Partnership

WENATCHEE Trail Connections

Rivers, Trails & Conservation
Assistance Program
National Park Service
• • •
Seattle, Washington



American Society of
Landscape Architects
• • •
Washington State
Chapter



Produced by the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service (NPS Rivers & Trails); and the Washington Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects (WASLA). Brochure design by Dan Gilchrist Design. Photos courtesy of NPS Rivers & Trails and Chelan-Douglas Land Trust. Printed on recycled paper.

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Neighborhoods, small towns, and community groups sometimes face planning or design challenges that they are unable to meet due to a lack of expertise, funding, or other resources. The partnership between NPS Rivers & Trails and WASLA lets communities benefit from the pairing of Rivers & Trails' organizational and planning skills and the technical design skills of WASLA's landscape architects.



One of the most effective vehicles for producing ideas with limited time and resources is the design *charrette*. A charrette is typically an intensive, illustrated brainstorming session that involves any number of people and lasts from a few hours to a few days. Traditionally it dates from the early 1900s at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, in Paris, where professors would send a cart (charrette) around to pick up students' work at the submission deadline. Some students, frantic to complete their

drawings, would jump on the cart as it rolled down the street, hence, working "*en charrette*."

In preparation for a community design charrette, NPS Rivers & Trails works with project partners to organize the event and define the goals for generating design ideas and potential solutions for their recreation or conservation project. During the charrette, WASLA design professionals, teamed with local community experts, work to quickly grasp project challenges and craft visual design solutions. The objective is high creativity and productivity. No ideas are discarded due to impracticality or questionable details. These are decisions for the community to make later, after the design professionals have returned home, and ideas are moved forward from within the community.

The image of frantic, last minute drawing (sometimes described as "organized chaos") is still characteristic at today's charrettes, particularly since participants typically present the ideas they generate during the charrette at a public forum of some kind. It is here, at this final charrette wrap-up, where the synergy of the work between outside professionals and local experts is highlighted and handed-off to the larger community.

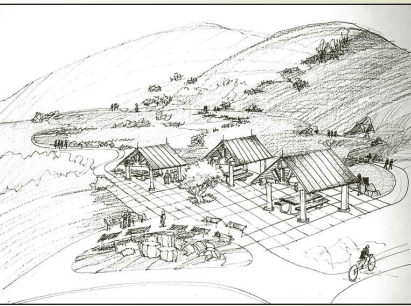
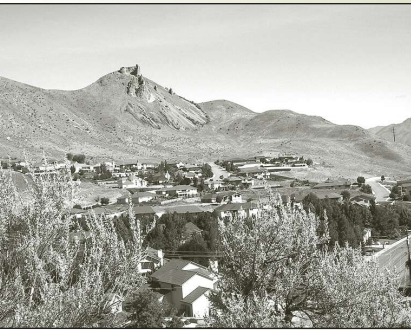


Inside is a "snapshot" of how NPS Rivers & Trails and WASLA helped the Wenatchee community envision their future trails....

TRAIL CONNECTIONS

A Community Design Event

WENATCHEE, WASHINGTON



In the center of Washington State, the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia Rivers forms the broad Wenatchee Valley, a unique and diverse region that supports the sister communities of Wenatchee (population 28,000) and East Wenatchee (population 8,300). Just a few miles from the Columbia River, Wenatchee's western foothills mark the transition between the rugged shrub-steppe desert of the Columbia Plateau and the ponderosa pine forests of the eastern Cascade Mountains. These steep, arid foothills jut skyward, creating a sharp silhouette and scenic backdrop for the city's western edge.

The foothills trail system, an informal network of trails on a mixture of public and private lands, is still an undiscovered treasure for many Wenatchee residents. Public access to the trails currently relies on implicit partnerships between private landowners, government agencies, and the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust. This has resulted in some conflicts between trail users and private landowners, and between trail users and wildlife managers. In addition, some of the traditional access points to the foothills trails have been lost as the city grows and development expands into the western slopes.

A group of residents, private landowners, and representatives from local governments and land management agencies formed the Wenatchee Valley Trails Coalition in 2003 to create a Trails Plan for non-motorized recreational use in the western foothills. The Trails Coalition wants to develop a formal community trail system that minimizes impact on surrounding land owners and neighbors while preserving, protecting, and improving wildlife habitat and public open space. Moreover, they hope to make the foothills increasingly available as an outdoor education tool for the Wenatchee School District, the Public Utility District, and other trail partners.

In 2004, the Trails Coalition was awarded technical assistance from the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program to guide development of a Foothills Trails Plan with support from trail partners and the Wenatchee community.

That same year the Coalition received a \$5,000 grant through the Chelan-Douglas Health District and the STEPS to a Healthier US program for development of the Trails Plan, and professional design services were offered by a landscape architect working with the Trails Coalition.

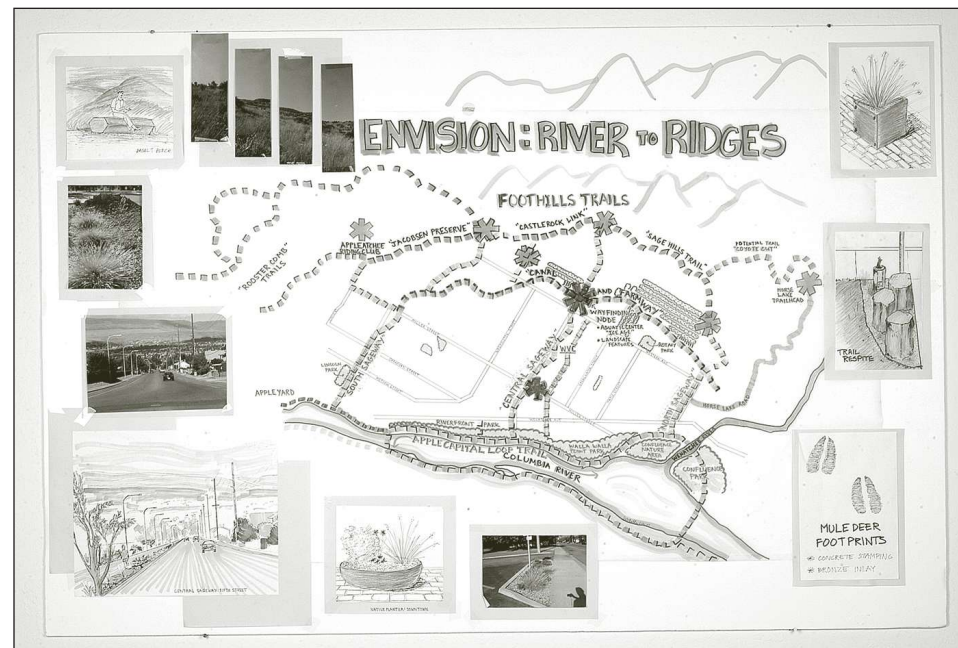
To raise public awareness of the Wenatchee Foothills Trails and the importance they play within the Wenatchee community, NPS Rivers & Trails, WASLA, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, Wenatchee Valley Trails Coalition, and the City of Wenatchee sponsored "Wenatchee Trail Connections," a community design charrette, in June 2005. The event brought 14 designers from Spokane, Seattle, Moses Lake, Palouse, Coeur d'Alene, Milwaukee (WI), Chattanooga (TN), and Los Angeles. They were complemented by 17 members of the Wenatchee community to form two design teams that worked intensely through a three-day weekend at Wenatchee Valley College.

(continued at right)

RESULTS

Three months after the "Wenatchee Trail Connections" event, people were still talking about the trail design ideas and how they could be brought to life in their community. Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, with support from *The Wenatchee World* newspaper, is preparing a stand-alone newspaper insert called "Envision River to Ridges" that will feature reproductions of the charrette teams' design boards and recommendations. The insert is intended to spark interest in a larger conversation that will ideally move the community beyond the charrette toward a future connected trail system. "Improving the trails broadens the horizons of Wenatchee beyond farming and agriculture. It's a chance to enhance the future through recreation and education. It's not just apples and agriculture to our community," said Korey Korfiatis, Wenatchee resident and business owner.

A boost to regional trail connections occurred on September 6, 2005, when the Board of Chelan County Commissioners passed a resolution endorsing the concept of a continuous non-motorized trail system connecting communities in the Wenatchee River Valley. The Wenatchee Valley Trails Coalition is now incorporating many of the charrette trail head concepts in the draft Wenatchee Foothills Trails Plan they are creating for public review in Spring 2006. The Coalition will then seek approval and adoption of the Trails Plan by Chelan County, the City of Wenatchee, the Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council, and other stakeholders. Presentations of the charrette products have been made to the City Council, City Parks Board, City Planning Department, and the Wenatchee Planning Commission. The Wenatchee Trail Connections charrette is already proving to be an important investment in Wenatchee's future.



"River to Ridges" trail connections proposed by charrette designers included "Sageway" corridors that link downtown Wenatchee with the Foothills Trails. Native plants, natural colors, and graphic images are part of their vision.

"Link the trail to the greater community and it very likely will remain a trail, and be well used. It will be an amenity worth bragging about, a magnet for newcomers. Concentrate on connections, and everything else will follow."

Tracy Warner, Editor, *The Wenatchee World*

Team members first met Friday afternoon for a two-hour Windshield Tour of the community. A Welcome Dinner that evening allowed participants to mingle and then hear from a host of city leaders and resource experts. Saturday morning, participants received a general orientation to the charrette and its desired outcomes before breaking into two teams and heading out into the community for field work and more information gathering from local experts. The "Green Team" was charged with designing an integrated system of trail heads for the Wenatchee Foothills Trails. The "Yellow Team" explored connections between the Foothills Trails and key community resources such as schools, city bike routes, neighborhood parks, Columbia Station, Art on the Avenues, Stanley Civic Center, the Riverfront Parks System, Apple Capital Loop Trail, and other popular downtown hubs.

Both teams re-convened at Wenatchee Valley College for lunch and set about brainstorming solutions, organizing themselves into work groups, and finding the maps and information they needed to produce their graphic ideas. By mid afternoon, each team was anxious to share their perspectives to see how they could build on one-another's proposals to present the most creative ideas to the community. Work continued late into the night, and everyone returned the next morning to crank out final design boards and recommendations for implementing their ideas.

A Community Open House at Stanley Civic Center on Sunday afternoon was a good venue for displaying the impressive collection of graphic work, and for allowing charrette participants to pass their ideas on to the community. Both teams chose several spokespeople to present their designs and ideas—balancing the task between visiting design professionals and members of the Wenatchee community.

There was no lack of creative ideas: bring some of the foothills' features to the streets of Wenatchee by creating "sageways;" reach out to the Hispanic community by developing trail brochures in Spanish; install foothills-related art at Columbia Station; support a "farmway" concept along the Highline Canal that embraces agricultural heritage and recreational use; use foothills images and colors in the downtown area; and much more. Lively discussion between team members and the audience took place at the end of the Open House, when residents got a closer look at the design boards, asked questions, and chose their favorite trail ideas.

"It was a wonderful event, rich in culture, creativity, and interesting, neat people. And the project was a good challenge, one that was open ended enough to allow for flexibility in reaching the desired outcomes."

Angie Tornes, NPS Rivers & Trails Program, Milwaukee, WI

"...as a charrette participant, I was very pleased with the organization of the event, the local spirit and commitment of so many donated resources... You truly 'stepped up' to protect and also provide appropriate access to the shrub-steppe landscape hillside areas of Wenatchee."

Matt Mathes, WASLA Chapter President

